

Family by pendragonfics

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Summary:

Sometimes, family isn't nuclear, with the happy little American love story where it's all good and well. Family is two adults who found each other in their times of need, and a miracle child.

Family

Author's Note:

Okay, so I just finished watching *Stranger Things* 2 and lemme tell you, I am in too deep for Hopper, he's my favorite in the show. I mean, besides Max -- what a BAMF! But *Hopper*! I've always been a fan of him and his sarcasm, but what got me was how broken he was about his family. So. Here's me fixing all that Hopper angst.

Also, I made a [playlist](#) for Hopper, because why not? It goes well with reading the fic, I think.

It's dark when he comes home, but you're awake. You've been awake for almost fifteen hours, and despite sore eyes, an aching headache, and sore limbs, you're sitting up, to see the door open, and close very slowly. To see the way Jim takes off his shoes, peels off his socks, puts his hat upon the rack by the window. He looks as tired as you feel – in the moonlight through the window, you can see the lines above his eyebrows, beside his eyes.

Jim's barefoot and stifling a yawn, working on undoing the buttons on his uniform. You watch as he walks toward you in the kitchenette, but as he turns the paraffin lamp, he jumps a little, but still quiet. You're sitting on the bench, beside the sink, legs dangling like a novelty made-at-home dolly, wearing one of Hopper's holey old shirts and boxers.

“You scared me,” he says, low, quiet. “What are you doing up so late?”

You shrug, gesturing to the cup of tea growing cold beside you. “Story came to me, couldn’t stop, and then couldn’t sleep.” You take a sip from your cold tea, and wince, “Why are you home so late?”

There could be a myriad of answers. Kids egged a house down on an avenue in town – perhaps he'd helped an elderly lady at the grocery store pack her bags into her late husband's station wagon, maybe the

paperwork wasn't done on time and Flo stopped him until it was completed. But there wasn't any egg on his wrinkled uniform, nor groceries in his arms, or ink on his hand.

"Found a kid walking around town, all alone. Drove them home." His smile wan, he moved past you, flicking the stove on heat up the soup you made earlier for yourself and El. "Flo wanted to know how the story's coming along."

You make a noise. "Slow. Be better if I didn't screw up my last typewriter." You hummed, showing your hands to your boyfriend, hands that were covered in pen scratches and ink transferred from the paper.

"_____, those things don't come cheap," he mutters, taking his dinner from the fridge, shoving it in the microwave.

"Ellie went to bed happily again." You change the subject, tapping your bare foot lazily on the cabinets.

Jim raises an eyebrow. "Ellie?" he asks.

You shrug, drawing a knee to your chest, watching as the screen on the magical microwave oven counts down the seconds until it *pings!* "She doesn't like me calling her Jane, and you know I feel funny calling her a number. She's a teenager, Jim, Ellie suits her, I think." You pause, and sliding down from the countertop, you add, "She was kind of bummed she didn't get a goodnight kiss from her dad."

The clock on the wall clicks over to the new hour, reading the hour that the witches come out to play. Or at least, that's what your mother used to tell you back home in Boston, before the split as a child when your dad moved you to Hawkins.

"She called me Dad?" Jim asks, just as the sausages and gravy are ready.

You nod. "Right before nodding off. Said she missed your scratchy kisses." You grin, eyes scrunching up like there's no greater happiness in the world than seeing the person you love described so simply. "I missed your scratchy kisses too."

Jim takes his meal to the table, smiling to himself. You stand there in the kitchen, still, swaying. It's almost like you're caught between being awake, and overtired, or perhaps you're imitating a ghost caught between this world and the one beside it, swaying in the breeze of life. But you snap out of your moment when Jim's fork clanks against the table, and carrying the paraffin lamp to the table, you sit opposite, silent.

While you're not as important in your workplace as Jim; you're just a journalist at the local newspaper, writing the little things that happen around the place. The editor in chief had a 'real' writer for the larger stories, saying you were second rate because you were more creative, and wrote things that weren't real (or maybe because you were a woman). One day you'll be published, a shiny hardcover in the hands of the nation – but until then, you wrote about the effects of the weather on chicken farming in the outer-regions of Hawkins.

It was a strange paring, your father said – you, and Jim. The divorced recluse of a police chief, and the daydreaming old maid who wrote. But you hadn't talked to him in ten years, so what he thought didn't matter to you. You weren't that old. Thirty-five was just a number. Hopper insisted you were young – but then again, he'd gone to hell and back, fought in the war, lost his first family. He thought he was as old as the mountains themselves, and at the best of times (as well as the worst) doubted why you loved him as much as you did.

“_____, you've got the thousand-mile stare.” Jim hums, and you're brought back to the moment, instead of inside your head. He glances to his dinner, almost all eaten, and says, “What about you head to bed, and I follow?”

You nod, too tired to speak. But when your head hits the pillow, you're gone, consumed by sleep's touch.

You're standing before the mirror on the basin, hairbrush in hand. Except, it's not your hairbrush, and you're not checking out your reflection in the mirror. Instead, you're carefully carding the tines through your adoptive daughter's hair, trying to get her in the habit of brushing her unruly locks. El's face is composed of unadulterated joy, eyes bright, mouth stretched wide with excitement.

“Big day today,” you say, running your fingers through the last bit, untangling a knot the size of your thumbnail. “First day of school.”

She bounces on the balls of her feet at the sound of the word *school*, meeting your eyes in the mirror. When you first met El, she’d acted all shy like a woodland creature, then, after time went on, moody like a storm about to break. That was before all the commotion with the Hawkins lab and the passing of Mr. Newby. Now she’s sunshine in a bottle, threatening to explode.

“What was your...favourite?” she asks, selecting the right words.

You beam. “I loved the library. They have books on everything there.” You fluff out her head of curls with both hands, the hairbrush tucked under your arm, and add, “But my favourite class was where we read the books.” You peer out of the bathroom, seeing where Jim is lacing his boots, a piece of toast between his teeth as he rushes out the door, “Your dad liked it more in gym.” You remember the way he looked back in high school in the uniform, and you chuckle.

“Gym?” El asks. “Mike said it’s hard.”

You shake your head. “You’re not Mike, though, are you?” You ask her, and moving before her, you kneel, pushing the hair from her eyes away, you add, “Hey, Ellie,” you see your reflection in her eyes, a hesitant smile now on her lips. “You’ve got this.”

“I’ve got this.” She repeats.

“Okay, time to go!” Jim calls out from the other room. At this, El runs around you, her new overalls sliding down her legs, curls bouncing. “_____, have you got the keys?”

“Yeah!” you exclaim, jangling them from your pocket. “Have you got Ellie’s bag?”

“I’ve got it!” She shouts, the sound of the sheriff’s wagon door slamming followed suit. You’re almost out of the door, and from the backseat, El makes the horn *toot* and hollers out the open window, “C’mon! I don’t want to be late!”

She’s not late – in fact, when you two walk her into the

administration building with her, she's run away as her class schedule is handed to her, off to walk to class with Mike, Dustin, Lucas, Max and Will. Mr. Clarke stills her running, and from the window in the wall, you see her smile is big, group of friends even bigger.

"Your daughter seems excited to be here, Mr. and Mrs. Hopper," the older office lady smiles, handing you a copy of El's class schedule.

You glance to Jim, and he to you, scrambling over your words, until you manage to say, "We're not – I mean, we're just –,"

She raises an eyebrow, and goes on to say, "School ends at three, and if we have any trouble, I'll make sure to get Principle Coleman call." She smiles once more, and looks at your hand, holding Jim's, "Are you sure you two aren't married?"

You're at work, staring at the typewriter that's screwed to the desk, waiting for the fingers attached to your creative soul to pick up something and translate it to words. But sitting there doesn't help, and when you return from the coffee machine, you're face to face with your boss, whose fingers are pawing through your reporter's journal, eyeing the notes you've made over the last six months in its pages.

"Saw you were stuck, _____," he places your notebook down, the cover *thwacking* the desk very un-quietly. "You've been all over Hawkins, and still, found nothing worth writing about."

You nod, cradling the cup of hot coffee close to your chest. "That's right, sir."

He hums. "Maybe what you need to consider is something a little closer to home?" He asks, and with that, goes off on his way by Debbie the copier for his regular demands of the poor P.A.

You still. *Close to home?* You think about how boring your home life is, until you realise how un-boring it is, and inspired, you sit, and over the next four hours of the work day, manage to churn out and edit something that could be read by the people of Hawkins.

I grew up alone. I suppose we're never alone; we have a mother, a father, a community. My parents left each other when I was young, and my father worked nights when I was at school. People didn't want to be my friend, since I was a loner. I had my books, I had my mind, I had my mind to write the passages for books to come.

When I was at college, my boyfriend was fighting in the end of the Vietnam War. When I was starting at the newspaper, my boyfriend was married to another woman. When I re-met my boyfriend, he had acquired the position of sheriff at Hawkins Police station. He had lost so much in his life, and when we met, not for the first time as gangly teenagers who wanted so much more than what fate would give us, but when we were adults, hardened by life in our own ways, brought into moulds by our own hardships, there was something there. That feeling of loneliness.

This was not a conventional love story. I never wanted to grow up to be in a cul-de-sac, to do what any of my relatives could have done. I am a woman, making decisions for myself, loving a man who can make decisions for himself. And together, we love our girl, who can make decisions very well for herself. Sometimes, family isn't nuclear, with the happy little American love story where it's all good and well. Family is two adults who found each other in their times of need, and a miracle child.

You see, together, you are not without hope. You just can't be – two heads, two hearts are better than just one. Since this we have solved mysteries buried deep beneath the dirt under Hawkins, Indiana, and found something that wasn't loneliness to bond ourselves.

“It's, uh, pretty feminist,” your boss commented, glancing up from the type-written paper near the end of the working day, “Is this what you're willing to submit?”

You nod.

“It'll be printed for tomorrow.” He slides it into his pile, extinguishing a cigarette in a cup on his desk. “Keep an eye out, _____.”

You're waking up slowly, gently, when there's what feels like an earthquake. But no, there isn't another disaster falling over Hawkins – instead, it's El, bouncing on the bed, wearing the *Star Wars* t-shirt that you bought her when you took her to see *Return of the Jedi*. In her hands is a crumpled newspaper, scrunched by her hands. You glance beside you, to see what Jim makes of this morning tyranny, but he's not beside you, snoring as usual. Instead, he's behind El, watching the both of you.

"What is this, a bouncy house?" you ask, pushing yourself up from the covers. "What's the news, Ellie?"

Her grin widens. "You're famous, Mom!"

You're caught on the word *famous*, and peering forward to see what your daughter has, you almost miss the word *mom* and you feel overwhelmed. But then you see on the newspaper page caught between El's pre-teen fingers your name, and beneath it, your words. You feel faint suddenly, even though you've been awake for all of two minutes, and let out a breathy laugh.

"I'm famous?" you ask, pretending to peer closer at the page, and instead, take El in your arms, and tackle her to the bed. "How about I'm the luckiest lady in all of Hawkins!" you laugh, tickling your daughter's side. She squirms, laughing, and from the doorway, so does Jim. "Come on, let's have a big family hug."

El laughs, and before you know it, you're all sitting on the bed, cuddled up like you're hiding from a snowstorm, but instead of it being bad, you're all in a fit of laughter. When El excuses herself to call Mike on the walkie-talkie, Jim leans into your ear, whispering, "You have no idea how much I love you both."

You raise a brow at that, replying, "I'm pretty sure you do, Chief." You kiss his cheek, and glancing to the door, where El could appear any second, and murmur, "She called me Mom!"

Author's Note:

You can find me on Tumblr on as @chaotic-lovely, and if you want to request a fic, check out

@pendragonfics! ♀•?✿